1. In your country, are education issues approached through the lens of the human right to education, and if so, with what challenges and results? In your view, what is the added value of such an approach in your work?

Times during the pandemic were very challenging for our education for sure. Unfortunately, education is one of the main areas of racial discrimination in Slovakia. The educational gap between children from lower socioeconomic origins, particularly those from marginalized Romani settlements, and those from wealthier families widened as a result of school closings during the COVID-19 pandemic. That time, we truly could talk about a rising level of segregation in educational system. Also, because of the long and complicated legislation process regarding higher education, the HEIs were not recognized as well as other educational levels in Slovakia. Our NUS, ŠRVŠ, always pointed to this fact and protected the rights of HEI students during all times. We constantly monitored the situation at universities and communicated with our ministry. The true value of our NUS is that delegates coming from all the HEIs in Slovakia can discuss their problems or questions related also to education as human rights and our work encourage students to speak about it, as it surely is not a “sure thing” everywhere and is very important for individualism.

2. How do you assess the 4 A’s framework of availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability as conditions for realizing the right to education? Is such a framework integrated in legal and policy documents relating to education in your country, as well as used in practice? If not, what are the key obstacles? Should the framework be reviewed to include other dimensions? If so, which?

Every person of the Slovak Republic has the right to education, as stated in Article 42 of the Constitution, while specifics are outlined in special rules. Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Upbringing and Education is Slovakia's fundamental law governing education (the School Act). The Slovak Republic's citizens have a legal right to free public basic and secondary education under this law. The statute lays forth the requirements for students' eligibility for financial aid from public funding. The newest legislative Higher Education Act regarding HEIs gives a better approach to the 4 A's framework. Regarding the COVID-19 situation, pandemic's compensatory actions are focused on helping vulnerable groups with financial support and tutoring. The State Secretary for National and Inclusive Education position was established by the Ministry of Education along with the Inclusive Education Department.

3. The human right to education entails States’ obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the right to education in international human rights law. To what extent are these obligations clearly identified in your country’s legislation and in practice?

All types of discrimination in school are expressly outlawed under the Education Act and international human rights instruments Slovakia has ratified, particularly segregation (segregation itself is however not defined in Slovak legislation). On the national level of legislation, it is considered as one of the most important.

5. Is the right to education considered a justiciable right in your country and if so which aspects of that right? If so, please provide a short summary of emblematic cases.

As already mentioned, Article 42 of the Slovak Republic's Constitution ensures everyone's universal right to education and provides special assistance to those with disabilities in order to help them prepare for careers (Article 38, Section 2).

6. To what extent are the non-discrimination and equality principles respected in implementing the right to education in your country? Have past recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur on the right to education of vulnerable and marginalized populations been taken into account? If so, can you list which ones?

The government had implemented the Strategy for Inclusive Approach in Education 2030 in December 2021. The objective of the strategy is to enhance the current state of education for all children, students, and pupils in schools without difference. The document outlines the fundamental principles of inclusive education in Slovak Republic kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools, and universities. It also emphasizes prevention at a young age and lifelong learning in the system of counseling and prevention. In accordance with the principle of equal treatment in education established by a law specifically (Act No. 365/2004 Coll. on Equal Treatment in Certain Areas and Protection Against Discrimination and Amending Certain Laws (Anti-Discrimination Act), the rights established by this Act are guaranteed for all applicants and students under Section 55 part 2 of Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education Institutions and on Amendments to Certain Acts. Discrimination based on age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, race, color, disability, language, political or other opinion, membership in a national minority, religion or belief, trade union activity, national or social origin, property, lineage, or other status is prohibited in accordance with the principle of equal treatment.

8. In your view, what are the main challenges in your country in implementing the right to education?

Slovakia's educational system needs to achieve much better results at all levels. The adoption of mandatory pre-primary education and the gradual extension of enrolment through legal entitlement for children as young as 3 years old remain major obstacles to increasing inclusion. New accreditation requirements for internal quality assurance systems, school management reform, and financial adjustments to encourage research and creative activity performance should all result in improvements to higher education. Slovakia's long history of fostering education has left behind a magnificent legacy in the form of a system of education that is generally of excellent quality. Even a relatively strong ideological pressure throughout the time of the Communist Party's leadership could not overcome this fact. Despite the previous ideological pressure, relatively high-quality education persisted. Strangely, the majority of the changes to the Slovak educational system took place when there was no longer any strong ideological influence.

9. What are the crucial issues to address, nationally as well as internationally, to ensure the realization of the right to education?

A great challenge dwells in the process of finding and helping trained and qualified teachers. The Slovak Republic likewise has an issue with it. Secondary school teachers require a vast professional database that goes much beyond the secondary school curriculum, but they require significantly fewer pedagogical skills than elementary school teachers. It is somehow “foolish” to have a definite goal of creating a universal instructor. Also, lack of communication and cooperation between states and NGOs suited for education can be viewed as non-sufficient, in Slovakia as well. All the problems that are affecting the global situation can be viewed as problems directly affecting educational systems all over the world.